

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MELBOU 01235 120720Z

21

ACTION EA-09

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R 120516Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2927

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 1235

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E O 11652 GDS

TAGS PINT, AS

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY PRECIPITATES NEW INTERNAL CRISIS

REF: CANBERRA 5268

1. REFTEL AMPLY COVERS ONE ASPECT OF ALP EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEETINGS JULY 31 THROUGH AUG 2. LABATT
AND CONGEN NOW SUPPLY AMPLIFYING FOOTNOTES.

2. ON HARRADINE, HAWKE CONFESSES TO BEING SUCKERED BY
LEFT. LED BY GIETZELT AND WILLIAMS, THE LEFT "CAME
EARLY AND STAYED LATE." ENCOURAGING COMMITTEE TO BELIEVE
BUSINESS WOULD BE FINISHED FRIDAY AFTERNOON, LEFT TOOK
ADVANTAGE OF EARLY DEPARTURE OF FOUR PRO-HARRADINE
MEMBERS TO PASS RESOLUTION BY VOTE OF NINE TO SIX TO
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PAGE 02 MELBOU 01235 120720Z

RECONVENE SATURDAY. (TASMANIA DEPUTY PREMIER DOUG

LOWE TOLD CONGEN AUG 7 THAT VOTE WOULD HAVE BEEN TEN TO NINE OTHER WAY IF HE, SENATOR KEN WREIDT, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CREAN AND PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAD NOT LEFT EARLY BUT HAD INSTEAD BEEN PRESENT AND VOTING. LOWE WAS UNABLE TO GET AIR BOOKING BACK FROM TASMANIA ON SATURDAY MORNING.) IN EVENT, HAWKE PLEADED WITH SATURDAY MEETING NOT TO EXPEL HARRADINE, BUT ACTION PASSED ELEVEN TO ONE.

3. TASMANIA STATE SECRETARY KATH VENN TOLD LABATT AUG 7, THAT STATE ORGANIZATION BITTERLY RESENTED FEDERAL ACTION. VENN CONCENTRATED HER VENOM ON HAWKE, WHO HAD PUBLICLY CRITICIZED TASMANIAN PARTY ABILITY AND FINANCES. ALTHOUGH VENN NOTED THAT HE IS FEDERAL ALP PRESIDENT, HAWKE "HAS NEVER SET FOOT IN THIS OFFICE (IN TASMANIA)." SHE COMMENTED THAT TASMANIAN ALP HAD MAINTAINED LABOR GOVTS IN STATE FOR THIRTY-EIGHT OF PAST FORTY YEARS AND "FEDERALS SHOULD COME OUT HERE AND LEARN HOW TO WIN AN ELECTION."

4. STATE PARTY EXECUTIVE AND STATE PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS AT SEPARATE MEETING HAVE BOTH DECIDED TO KEEP HARRADINE ON PARTY ROLLS, PENDING HIS APPEAL AS OF RIGHT TO NEXT FULL CONFERENCE OF FEDERAL ALP, PRESENTLY SCHEDULED FOR EARLY 1977.

5. HOWEVER, FEDERAL EXECUTIVE POLLED BY TELEGRAM, HAS ISSUED COMPLIANCE OF ORDER TO TASMANIAN BRANCH WHICH EXPIRES AUG 14. FAILURE TO COMPLY COULD RESULT IN SUSPENSION OF STATE PARTY AND FEDERAL INTERVENTION.

6. IN CONVERSATION WITH CONGEN, DOUG LOWE, WHO IS ALSO STATE ALP PRESIDENT, REPORTED COMPLETE REJECTION OF FEDERAL POSITION BY TASMANIAN PARTY. LOWE FEELS CURRENT STATE-WIDE ANTIPATHY FOR ALP FEDERAL GOVT WILL LEAD TO REJECTION OF HIS LABOR PARTY IN RESULTANT ELECTION.

7. COMMENT: IN MELBOURNE 839 OF JUNE 30 (NOTAL), CONGEN AND LABATT POINTED OUT BASS BY-ELECTION DISASTER
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PAGE 03 MELBOU 01235 120720Z

SHOULD SHOW FEDERAL ALP THAT IT CANNOT RUN STATE PARTY ORGANIZATIONS FROM CANBERRA. SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ELECTION SUBSEQUENTLY SHOWED SAME THING, SINCE DUNSTAN SQUEAKED BACK IN ONLY AFTER DISASSOCIATING HIS STATE GOVT FROM FEDERAL ALP GOVT (MELBOURNE 943). YET REPORT TO FEDERAL ALP EXECUTIVE BY PARTY SECRETARY DAVID COMBE LEAKED TO PRESS AUG 12 BLAMES BASS BY-ELECTION LOSS ON TASMANIAN ALP, IGNORING FACT THAT

ORIGINAL FEDERAL ALP ATTEMPT TO DICTATE CANDIDATE
BACKFIRED AND THAT SUBSEQUENTLY WHITLAM AND COMBE RAN
BY-ELECTION AND IGNORED LOCAL ALP. COMBE'S REPORT
HAS INFURIATED TASMANIAN ALP AND MAKES TASK OF
CONCILIATION BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL PARTIES ALL THE
MORE DIFFICULT. IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT PRESENT
CRISIS MAY SPLIT TASMANIAN LABOR PARTY. IN TELEPHONE
CONVERSATION WITH CONGEN, LOWE, WHO WAS HOPING TO
SUCCEED NEILSON AS PREMIER AND LEAD UNIFIED PARTY BACK
INTO POWER IN NEXT STATE ELECTION, COMMENTED RUEFULLY
THAT FEDERAL ALP HAS DIVIDED TASMANIAN PARTY AND GRAVELY
DAMAGED LABOR'S CHANCES OF HOLDING ON TO TRADITIONALLY
ALP STATE. HE COMMENTED BITTERLY THAT FEDERAL OPPOSITION
LEADER FRASER AND STATE LIBERAL LEADER MAX BINGHAM MUST
BE "RUBBING THEIR HANDS." ENC COMMENT.
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